# Freedom Watch

# Citizens Project

*This is a PAID INSERT*


## COFFEE WITH A CONSCIENCE

**Citizens Project will host its third Coffee with a Conscience discussion on Tuesday, April 6, 2004 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at Jack Quinn Irish Ale House and Pub (upstairs) 21 S. Tejon. The discussion topic will be "Constitutional Amendments: Process and Purpose".**

## We've Moved!

**Citizens Project's new offices are located at 210 E Vermijo St, Suite 10. The building, formerly the Smokebrush Theater, is located at the corner of Nevada Avenue and Vermijo Street.**

## Anti-immigrant ballot initiative undermines community health, safety

*By Jacob Tabor*

An amendment to the Colorado constitution has been proposed to prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving state, county, or city funds except in emergency situations.

The proposed amendment, originally put forward by U.S. Representative Tom Tancredo, is deliberately vague about what exactly will be affected. The courts of Colorado would decide exactly what constitutes an emergency, though it is likely everything from immunization clinics to after-school reading programs would be denied to undocumented immigrants.

One of the largest areas likely to be affected by the passage of the proposed amendment would be health services. Although emergency room care is certain to remain available for undocumented immigrants, many public health clinics would no longer be able to help some large parts of the population.

This would be "ethically and morally inhuman" to Dr. Chris Ruskey, chairperson of The Latino-American Health Network. Ruskey works hard to ensure everyone gets the medical care they need, and is uncomfortable with the idea of denying people services based upon their legal status.

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## Gay marriage debate pits equality against tradition

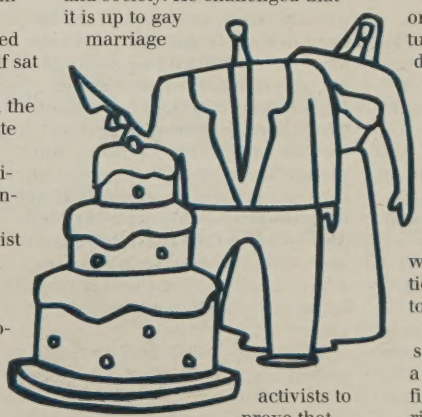
*By Michael Beckel*

"A wise and caring society never intentionally creates fatherless and motherless families," Glenn Stanton, Senior Research Analyst for Marriage and Sexuality at Focus on the Family, said to a full house in the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Half the audience erupted in applause, while the other half sat and stared.

Stanton represented Focus on the Family in a February 24th debate between the Colorado Springs–based promoter of traditional family values and the Denver–based Gill Foundation, represented by civil rights activist and gay and lesbian rights lawyer Evan Wolfson.

Stanton uses sociological and anthropological arguments to explain the importance of heterosexual families and to defend the conservative position. "Never has any society had homosexual marriage," he said. "Why do we have this historic universality?"

Stanton's answer is that marriage between one man and one woman most healthfully benefits children and society. He challenged that it is up to gay marriage activists to prove that same-sex marriage, and families headed by homosexual parents, will provide the same benefits as "natural marriage." He says that, until this is proved, individuals like him, who value the importance of strong mother and father figures for the healthy development of masculinity and femininity within children, will remain skeptical of the cause.



American society has already once attempted to reform the institution of marriage with no-fault divorce, said Stanton. This experiment, which was fueled by the interests of adults, "blew up badly." "Like disco and leisure suits, it seemed like a good idea at the time," but it gives us a lesson in caution. Should we be pushed by high ideals of justice and hope the experiment all works out when past experimentation has hurt children? asked Stanton.

People on the left and right are saying that gay marriage would be a radical change. This radical redefinition of the institution of marriage poses two dominant threats, Stanton continued. First, if one subgroup of Americans is allowed to change marriage-as-we-know-it, what legally prevents other subgroups from enacting more radical

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# Diversity at local campuses a work in progress

*by Michael Beckel*

When Ilyasah Shabazz was growing up, her mother, Dr. Betty Shabazz, and her father, Malcolm X, ensured that the education Ilyasah received was broad, diverse, and true. To their daughter, Betty and her husband Malcolm both stressed the themes of *E. pluribus unum* — out of the diversity of us all, we have forged this one great nation — and that history is empowerment. "All of us contribute to the process of learning," said Ilyasah Shabazz during the Black History Month Lecture at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (UCCS) on February 18th.

When she was a student, Shabazz said that the lessons at school left her bewildered. "[There was] no grandeur, no sense of achievement for my people [African Americans]." Shabazz called this a result of the whitewashing of history, which has been a "disservice to humanity." She said that such miseducation inhibits the potential of the entire nation.

In her lecture, Shabazz affirmed the need for the presence of ethnic diversity in higher education, for both the student body and the curriculum. "Diversity is required for education." This need is explained by Anthony Cordova, Coordinator of the Office of Student Multicultural Affairs at UCCS: "If you're going to live in a world that is diverse, you need to have experience being around people with different backgrounds."

UCCS and Colorado College (CC) both recognize that a commitment to diversity is crucial. Several officials at UCCS and CC agreed that university life, through clubs, classes, and dormitory life, aims to provide opportunities for students to get outside of their "zones of comfort."

As society evolves into a more multicultural place, university campuses must evolve as well. "Students come expecting to see students of color ... and to have faculty of color," said Associate Dean Victor Nelson-Cisneros of Colorado College.

Many administrators and faculty don't want this value of multiculturalism lost on their campuses. Rather, they are striving to live up to the challenge Shabazz articulated, by creating institutional support to promote diverse academic and social environments on campus. These support mechanisms include clubs and other student organizations, curricular reviews, increased hiring of minority faculty, and increased recruitment of minority students.

> ***"There is no simple way to do diversity on any campus. You've got to keep trying things."***
>
> *Anthony Cordova, Coordinator of the Office of Student Multicultural Affairs at UCCS*

Ethnic minorities presently compose 17% of the student bodies at both UCCS and CC. Lower than the national demographic, this percentage leaves the campuses feeling predominantly white.

"A person can be in a class with ten, twelve, fifteen other students, and as they look around the room, [they can sometimes] say, 'Wow, I'm the only person from my particular ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, or gender orientation' — all of those types of diversity we talk about," said Rochelle Mason, Director of Minority Student Life at CC, and a CC alumna.

These institutions are tackling this challenge head-on. "The plan for the campus calls for a radical change in demographics over the next seven to ten years," said Mason, describing CC President Richard Celeste's Action Plan. "We're talking about 27% [U.S. ethnic minorities] by 2010 for the student body, and the faculty going from the 11.5% that it's at now to 18%."

Several officials said that commitment to diversity requires another core value–namely perseverance. "There is no simple way to do diversity on any campus," said Cordova. "You've got to keep trying things."

# Ballot initative

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While proponents of the proposed amendment say it will save billions of dollars and will decrease the number of undocumented immigrants in Colorado, many others disagree.

"The amendment is very shortsighted. It does not recognize why these folks are here and the benefits they provide to our society and our economy," Ruskey says.

It is likely that if the amendment is passed, undocumented immigrants will not be able to attend STD and immunization clinics offered by the El Paso County Department of Public Health. Undocumented immigrants would also not be able to receive other services provided by community health clinics and the county.

Cindy Bohn, the Colorado Springs coordinator for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), says, "The amendment pretty much takes away the only help these people are getting. I already know undocumented adults with diabetes who do not get medical treatment because they cannot afford it."

Dr. Ruskey opposes further restriction on undocumented immigrants' access to medical services, for more than the ethical reasons.

"If the amendment impacts community health centers and the El Paso County Department of Public Health, you will end up costing the tax payers more because of the higher costs of urgent care, emergency care, and hospital services." Ruskey adds, "There's lots of information showing us that preventative care can prevent more costly hospital care later — the clearest examples being in the areas of prenatal care, diabetes, and heart diseases, where there are clear cost savings to be garnered from preventative services."

Dr. Ruskey and others are concerned not only about the health of undocumented immigrants, but also about the health of the community as a whole.

"It is going to be a public health nightmare," says Ruskey. "If you don't provide basic services like immunization and preventative care, the end result is going to be a less healthy community overall; that's for all of us."

The principle behind vaccinations is that as more people get them, disease is less likely to spread around. "If you're not immunizing a [particular] group of people in a population, you leave a segment that can become a nucleus of disease." As such, there is danger that denying undocumented immigrants subsidized vaccines will decrease the health of legal U.S. residents as well. The same is true of access to STD clinics.

*U.S. Representative Tom Tancredo*

Public health is not the only area that the amendment would affect if passed. Police and educational services might be restricted as well.

"We provide police services to everyone that is a victim of a crime and attempt to encourage all victims to contact the CSPD should they become victimized," says Lieutenant Stephen Tobias of the CSPD. It is not clear whether or not regular police services will be considered emergency services, but if the amendment passes, this might have to stop.

Already, some crimes might be going unreported, because of undocumented immigrants' fear that they might be deported upon contacting the police. Though Lieutenant Tobias says the CSPD would not turn in (to the INS) anyone who needs police assistance, he admits, "Many undocumented immigrants are still reluctant."

Luis Cortez, the president of the local council of the national League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) agrees, "Many undocumented wives and children are afraid that if they report domestic violence they will be deported." If police services are functionally not available to these people, crime and abuse are likely

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Citizens Project

# Community Voices

## *THE BEST MAN (uh, PERSON) FOR THE JOB? ...*

## *According to whom? In terms of what? For today or ten years from now?*

*By Margaret Duncombe*

Attacks on affirmative action, such as the one introduced by Ed Jones, state senator from Colorado Springs, are based on the misguided assumption that affirmative action requires employers and schools to give unfair advantage to less- or under-qualified applicants. However, the mandate of affirmative action is just to take positive measures to prevent discrimination. Affirmative action simply requires that we examine our policies and *justify* those that have discriminatory impacts.

Police departments historically had height requirements, which excluded many women from becoming officers. Affirmative action required that police departments justify their height requirements; when they could not, the courts struck down height requirements as discriminatory. Subsequent research on police violence reveals that female (generally shorter) officers are better able to defuse an explosive situation, while male (generally taller) officers are better able to suppress the situation once it has exploded. The most effective police departments will have both kinds of officers.

Airlines have exit-row seating policies, which have the effect of discriminating against the young, those traveling with children, and those with certain disabilities. Do affirmative action policies challenge these policies? No! Ability requirements for exit-row seating are central to the task of ensuring passenger safety. Affirmative action allows policies that discriminate in their effect, as long as the policies can be justified as *bona fide* qualifications for the job.

Attacks on affirmative action are also based on the assumption that qualifications are a simple matter of training or test scores. Nothing is this simple. A test is an indication of ability, but not a perfect measure of it. Further, if the 1000 applicants who score highest on an entrance exam all want to study biology and a school has seats in biology classes for only 100 students, reliance on the entrance exam as the sole determinant of qualification would be a mistake. Similarity in abilities, interests, and aspirations results in groupthink, which can only produce mediocrity in education, business, or government.

Finally, attacks on affirmative action assume that what is "best qualified" today will be the same tomorrow. Colleges that are currently accepting students for their incoming classes can not predict what students will need to know or be able to do in four, five, or six years. Similarly, organizations that hire today can't predict what skills will be needed to solve problems in five or ten years. The most successful institutions will be those that seek out and nurture a diversity of backgrounds, skills, and experiences, so that whatever the future holds, the organization will be prepared to respond. Ed Jones and others who oppose affirmative action would better serve their constituencies by promoting such diversity, instead of promoting the old cliché that race- (or gender- or religion-) blindness will lead to the best person for the job.

*Margaret Duncombe is a Citizens Project board member and professor of sociology at Colorado College.*

# Gay marriage

**from page 1**

changes? Might not polygamists make the same legal case to extend their right to marry any and all persons they are in love with? Secondly, he fears that this relativistic outlook about the importance of gender — husbands and wives, daddies and mommies — will erode the significance of marriage's words and societal structures.

Wolfson countered that we should not be intimidated by an "imagined parade of horribles." Marriage equality is not a change that should be feared. Rather, Wolfson challenged, we should embrace this idea in this very important time in our country's history, a time that he described as "a civil rights moment." To this cause, Wolfson added more historical and legal examples.

The institution of marriage has survived (and has been strengthened by) four other fundamental changes in the 20th century, Wolfson said. The first was ending race restrictions on marriage. The second was ending rules that made people in abusive and failed marriages "locked in for life." The third was ending the legal subordination of women within marriages, where they were often viewed as the property of their husbands. The fourth was ending the government's power to go into bedrooms and say how and when to have sex, and whether to use contraception.

Same-sex marriage would simply provide a legal commitment to match couples' personal commitments, said Wolfson. "It hurts no one and builds stronger communities for everyone."

A 1987 Supreme Court case, in which prisoners challenged their exclusion from marriage, found nothing exclusively heterosexual about marriage, Wolfson continued. The Court stated that marriage gives an individual the opportunity to make a statement of commitment to another person and receive support for that commitment from the community. Additionally, marriage offers a personal, spiritual, or religious dimension for growth, and the hope or prospect of "physical consummation." Moreover, marriage is the gateway to a vast array of protections and responsibilities. The Court ruled that the government could not exclude persons wanting to make this choice of security and statement, protections and responsibilities.

> ***"Several of Colorado's elected officials are playing a leading role in this reckless assault on the nation's constitution."***
>
> *Evan Wolfson*
> *Civil rights activist and gay and lesbian rights lawyer*

While both participants focused their talks on the notion of civil marriage, and on upholding the value of secular marriage and the separation of church and state, this event illustrated the deep philosophical differences at hand. One party believes that they are being asked to define marriage as "something it has never been" and the other party challenges that "what we want is to participate in the same rules."

The debate's timing coincided with President Bush's pledge, on the same day, to support the federal marriage amendment introduced by Colorado Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave.

"As a member of congress, I recently introduced H.J. Resolution 56, a bill that would define marriage in the Constitution and protect it from being radically redefined by activist judges that overstep their Constitutional boundaries," Musgrave said on her website. "Accepting gay marriage as an equivalent to traditional marriage will create a crisis far more severe than any danger marriage is facing."

The resolution, reworded on March 22 states: "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution nor the constitution of any State shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman."

During the debate, Wolfson noted the hypocrisy associated with this conservative push, in that "there is nothing moderate, conservative, or compassionate about amending the Constitution."

Upon the president's endorsement of the "Musgrave Amendment," Focus on the Family Chairman Dr. James Dobson issued a statement of support in a press release. "The president clearly understands that families formed through the union of one man and one woman are the best for America and America's children."

While states such as Massachusetts and California might be capturing the nation's spotlight in this debate, Colorado houses much of the energy for reserving the definition of marriage for traditionalists. "Several of Colorado's elected officials are playing a leading role in this reckless assault on the nation's constitution, just as they stampeded the voters of Colorado into a now-repudiated attack on the state's constitution in 1992," Wolfson said. "It's really a failure to serve the people of Colorado."



Citizens Project

# Ballot initative

from page 2

to rise.

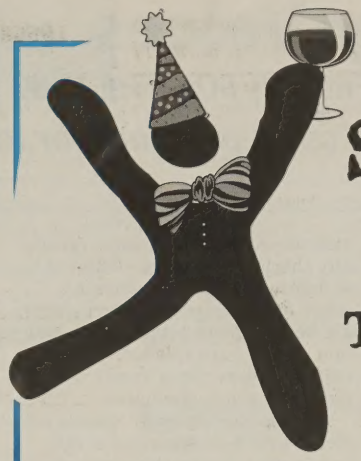
Even if police services would not be affected by the amendment, related victim-compensation programs might be. "These funds are used to make the victim whole again from their injuries if the victim is uninsured," says the assistant district attorney of Colorado Springs, Dan May. This often takes the form of therapy for a victim of a crime, "most typically for young victims of rape or sexual assault," says May. These programs are currently extended to all needy victims of crime, but might be restricted by the amendment should it pass.

Undocumented children would probably be excluded from after-school programs, including those aimed at helping children read. Other services might also be affected. The Denver Post, which came out against the amendment in an editorial, says, "The scope could be vast. Illegal immigrants would no longer have access to state-run health-care programs, nor could they get permits to start a business, buy a home, or, possibly, even get a library card."

Sponsor of the amendment, William Herron, says, "I know we have a large percentage of illegal aliens in Colorado and they use services taxpayers support and I don't think it's the way we should be using our money."

> ***"The amendment is very shortsighted. It does not recognize why these folks are here and the benefits they provide to our society and our economy."***
>
> *Dr. Chris Ruskey*

Before proponents of the proposed amendment, such as Herron, can begin using professional signature gatherers to get the 60,000 signatures needed to get on the ballot this fall, they must get approval from state officials. Cortez of the Colorado Springs office of LULAC fears that the mood is such that "if it gets on the ballot, it's liable to pass." Cortez and the local office of LULAC oppose the amendment.



## Save the Date:

**Thurs. May 13**
from 5:30-7:30pm
at The Warehouse
25 W. Cimarron

for the

## Divine Award Party

**The Divine Award is given annually to a person in the Pikes Peak region who has worked tirelessly to create a vibrant democracy in which equal rights are protected, individual freedoms are secure, differences are respected, and people fully participate in civic and community life.**

# Be part of the solution.

**"Citizens Project gives the public an opportunity to report injustice, to be listened to and then be part of the solution."**

*– Sharon Berthrong, board member and CP supporter*

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**Your voice for tolerance in the Pikes Peak region.**

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**MISSION:**

Citizens Project spotlights issues in the Pikes Peak region and mobilizes people to strengthen the traditional values of our nation: equal rights, individual freedoms, separation of church and state, civic engagement, and respect for diversity.

Citizens Project

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